

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-10 are in the application.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP56-80,364 and further in view of Behrends, are respectfully requested.

The Japanese reference relied on by the Examiner in rejecting the claims is directed to a dummy bar for continuous metal casting plants. However, the reference does not disclose a dummy bar for a continuous casting plant for preliminary steel sections.

As a result of the foregoing amendment, claim 1 of the present application has been restricted to a dummy bar for a continuous casting plant for preliminary steel sections.

The one-piece head piece is disclosed in the Japanese reference.

However, as correctly stated by the Examiner, the Japanese reference does not disclose or suggest flexible steel bands.

It is the Examiner's position that the reference to Behrends

discloses such flexible steel bands and that a combination of the references would result in the present invention as claimed.

Applicants respectfully disagree with this position.

The reference to Behrends merely shows a starter bar for a single strand continuous casting plant. Consequently, the reference to Behrends does not disclose or suggest a dummy bar for a continuous casting plant for preliminary steel sections. The use of a single strand would not be possible.

The reference to Behrends does disclose a "flexible spine 40". However, applicants respectfully submit that this flexible spine 40, composed of individual sections, is not comparable to the flexible spring steel bands according to the present invention as claimed in claim 1.

As a result of the foregoing amendment, the subject matter of claim 2 has been included in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that the feature of the flexible spring steel bands is not disclosed or suggested by any of the prior art references.

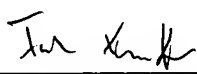
Also, it should be noted that since claim 1 of the present application calls for two rows of segments, it is also necessary to provide two flexible spring steel bands.

Therefore, it is submitted that the claims presently in the application are patentable over the art of record.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, it is submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully solicited.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with the application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

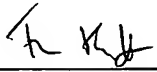
Respectfully submitted,
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D. C. 20231, on April 9, 2003

By:  Date: April 9, 2003
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